

ND PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS

A Newsletter for Project Managers

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Welcome to the North Dakota Project Management Newsletter!

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you information about project management-related (PM) topics and events in North Dakota (ND) Government and Higher Education. Regular features in the newsletter will include PM News, PM Lessons Learned, Ask the EPM Advisory Group, resources, and articles. We hope you find this newsletter to be helpful!

PM News

Monthly PMUG Meetings Underway

The purpose of the Project Management User Group (PMUG) is to promote the sharing of project management best practices and provide a forum for enhancing project management knowledge across the enterprise. About 40 people attended the introductory meeting on December 16, 2003, at the State Capitol. Meetings held on January 21 and February 17, 2004 included updates on Enterprise Project Management (EPM) initiatives and presentations by Dirk Huggett, Information Technology Department (ITD), on "Facilitating a Good Meeting."

The next PMUG meeting will be March 24, 2004, from 2 - 3 p.m., in the Pioneer Room. The agenda will include the review and discussion of a draft for the ND Project Management Guidebook, which is a "how-to" guide for project management in ND state government and higher education.

Future topics for PMUG meetings will include a review and discussion of project management practices, following the general outline of the forthcoming PM Guidebook.

Membership in the PMUG is open to anyone who is interested in learning more about project management. If you would like to join this group, please contact Jennifer Kunz at 328-4474 or jkunz@state.nd.us.

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PM Lessons Learned

John Graham, Job Service North Dakota, shared the following project management lessons learned at the PMUG meeting held on December 16, 2003:

1. The hard way to learn about the value of project management is when a project has already gone bad.
2. Some of the important PM practices that John, as a project sponsor, appreciates are when the project manager:
 - a. Works with the stakeholders to ensure, to the extent possible, that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the terminology that will be used during the project.
 - b. Reviews the contract with the project's sponsor and involved staff, so that everyone understands its salient points and the nature of the deliverables, and the sponsoring agency's responsibilities for timely review of deliverables received from the contractor.
 - c. "Rides herd" on all parties involved in the project. Agency staff have other full-time work and are subject to the "tyranny of the urgent," thus sometimes lose sight of the importance of adhering to the project's timetable. The "riding herd" is invaluable to a busy sponsor.
 - d. Sets required meeting agendas and brings copies of the materials to be discussed at the meetings and, if possible, distributes them electronically beforehand.
 - e. Ensures that the project management information system, whether electronic or hard copy, is followed by all parties. This ensures that a full record is kept of all relevant activities and documents relating to the project. This is important for two reasons: It allows a full review of the project in the "lessons learned" mode; and it allows a factually correct response if there should be a contractual issue.
 - f. Is "rigorous" in following the proper PM disciplines. That is the best way to secure proper outcomes to projects.

Ask the EPM Advisory Group

Question - I am the project manager on a fairly large project, and I am having difficulties exercising authority over my team members and our schedule is slipping. These team members report to a different division in our agency, but their manager said a few months ago that she would commit 60 percent of their time for this project; however, they are only dedicating 20 percent of their time. What can I do?

Answer - This is a common problem when a project team member does not report directly to you as the project manager. There are ways to help avoid this from happening with your future projects and ways to handle it now that you are in the middle of this situation.

Ways to Avoid Resource Conflicts

- Develop good time/effort estimates for tasks.
- Before project work begins, create and receive approval of a Project Charter, which is a document that describes the project at a high level and the resources that will be required. The managers impacted by the project should formally approve it, indicating their support and understanding of resource requirements.

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Ways to Handle Resource Conflicts as They Occur

- Work closely with the team member's manager to identify the problem and potential solutions.
- Document the issue in status reports and the issue log. This will not only serve to ensure the manager is aware of the issue, but will also document the fact that you as the project manager attempted to rectify the situation.
- If and when appropriate, escalate the issue to the Project Steering Committee. For example, if a change in resource allocation, scope, schedule, or quality is warranted, the Project Steering Committee should approve the change request.

The ND Enterprise Project Management (EPM) Advisory Group is a small workgroup of project managers who proactively identify project management issues and assist in the collection and development of project management best practices, such as tools and templates. See page 4 for a listing of EPM Advisory Group members and procedure for submitting a question.

Featured PM Web Sites

- **Local Project Management Training Opportunities** are listed on the ITD Policy and Planning Web Site.
<http://www.state.nd.us/itd/planning/proj.html>
- **Gantthead.com** is an online community for information technology (IT) project managers and has an abundance of free articles and tools.
www.gantthead.com
- **Life Support for Government Project Managers**
Government IT project managers unite! Government Computing News' Project Management Resource Center was the first complete web resource for government IT project managers.
http://www.gcn.com/Resource/project_management/index.html
- The **Project Management Institute (PMI)** is the developer of the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), the only ANSI standard in project management. www.pmi.org. For a comprehensive list of project management links, check out PMI's PM Links.
http://www.pmi.org/info/PP_PMLinks.asp
- **TenStep** has multiple project management processes to use and has free weekly project management advice delivered to your inbox.
www.TenStep.com
- **PM Boulevard** has weekly project management tips, articles, and recommended books delivered to your inbox and a comprehensive project management glossary.
<http://www.pmboulevard.com>

Featured PM Articles

Recognizing Project Warning Signs, Part 2

http://www.esi-intl.com/public/publications/022004executivewarningsigns_part2.asp

This column is the second in a two-part series on the classic warning signs of troubled projects. Part 1 was published in the December 2003 issue and discusses how to recognize early warning signs. Part 2 offers steps for conducting a project health check and what to do with the results.



Making Systems Work

<http://www.fcw.com/fcw/articles/2004/0126/oped-leto-01-26-04.asp>

It is going to take a solid program management infrastructure that spans agencies and creates knowledge-sharing systems.

VA Aces Business Case Exam

<http://www.fcw.com/fcw/articles/2003/1208/news-va-12-08-03.asp>

ESI Certification Key to Having All 59 IT Business Cases Accepted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

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